

PROGRAM TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM IN SAN DIEGO

BY FRANK LOSCO

On September 21, 2005, the California Prison Industry Authority (PIA), in collaboration with the San Diego community, kicked off the "Community Re-entry Project," a new program designed to enhance the integration of ex-offenders into the local workforce. PIA's partners in the project include the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, Mental Health Systems, Inc. (MHS), National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO), San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc. (SDWP), employers, and community and faith-based organizations. The project establishes an employment-centered network of services that is facilitated by a team of Transition Coordinators.

The primary goal of the project is to reduce recidivism by coordinating and enhancing services available in the San Diego community. Assisting ex-offenders to obtain services immediately upon release from custody helps them avoid situations that foster re-offending. The project is built upon the best practice of beginning the development of a re-entry pathway for the parolee prior to release.

The project will use a wrap-around case management

model for client populations that need assistance with improving decision-making skills and are subject to falling through the cracks of the service delivery system. The wrap-around approach is client/family centered, strength based, needs driven, comprehensive, team oriented, and requires individualized planning and services.

This re-entry model will begin with a client assessment that is prepared as early as nine months prior to release. That assessment packet will be given to one of the Transitional Coordinators, who will then provide seamless wrap-around services by coordinating with community partners to maximize successful re-entry for each client. Clients will have received valuable pre-release services from PIA, and will discharge with assessment information.

MHS, which operates over 100 mental health and alcohol and drug treatment programs throughout California, will provide coordination and provision of services and referrals to community-based organizations and faith-based organizations. MHS will also provide oversight and training of staff.

PIA and the San Diego County Sheriff's Department will provide in-custody training and job-readiness services and ensure program staff access to clients in custody. Parole and probation agencies will coordinate services with program staff to ensure mu-

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tual goals are met and program services do not overlap. Community-based organizations will provide alcohol, drug, mental health, housing, education, and other support services to clients.

San Diego Workforce Partnership's Career Center Network

will be supporting this initiative by providing job seekers with employment services that include job search, case management, and possibly training. In addition, SDWP's Business Services Initiative will offer employers recruitment and placement services, posting of job openings, job matching, and identifying incumbent worker training, if needed, once the client is placed.

NASSCO, the only major ship construction yard on the West Coast, is an example of an employer benefiting from the job training that is provided by PIA. NASSCO employs a staff of over 4,000 and has been a major employer of trained ex-offenders for many years.

Frank Losco is the Chief of Public Affairs at the California Prison Industry Authority. PIA, a component of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, is the state organization that operates factories in California's prisons. PIA work assignments help train and prepare inmates to obtain employment upon parole. For more information on PIA visit www.pia.ca.gov.

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